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STATE DEPARTMENT FOR IO/UNESCO:KSIEKMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/12/2019
TAGS: [UNESCO](#) [PREL](#) [PO](#)
SUBJECT: PORTUGAL ON UNESCO DIRECTOR-GENERAL ELECTION

REF: A. STATE 82701
[1](#)B. 08 LISBON 2689

Classified By: Gary B. Applegarth, Pol-Econ Officer, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) Poleconoff delivered reftel points on August 12 to Frederico Nascimento of the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Office of International Political Organizations. Nascimento thanked us for our input and said Portugal's preferred candidate will be decided in early September.

[1](#)2. (C) Nascimento said the candidates from Austria, Bulgaria, and Ecuador are all capable, but Ms. Baki of Ecuador, who Nascimento said claimed to be the U.S. favorite, was somewhat handicapped by Ecuador's diminutive international stature and her late start in lobbying for the position. Nascimento said election of Egyptian candidate Farouk Hosni would give the Arab world increased international prominence that is overdue, but his previous statements regarding book burning make it almost impossible to support him.

[1](#)3. (C) Nascimento concluded by extolling the virtues of Russian candidate Alexander Yakovenko, who he said had pledged more Russian funding to UNESCO if elected. Nascimento maintained that Russia feels it has an undeservedly negative reputation in the international community and that electing a Russian to lead such a "harmless" organization would somewhat assuage Russia's sensitivity and encourage more cooperative behavior in the future.

[1](#)4. (C) Comment: Nascimento's "nurturing" approach toward Russia is consistent with Portugal's Russia policy of recent years (ref B), and a Portugal vote for the Russian candidate as a means to further its economic diplomacy agenda is not implausible. End comment.

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